NCCARF
Terrestrial Biodiversity & Climate Change Adaptation in NSW
Management & Policy

Local Government Perspective

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Local Government and Shires Associations

- Policy Division - Environment Team
- Advocacy – 152 NSW councils
- Provide support & services to councils
- **Natural Resource Management** issues:

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Role of Local Government

- Legislative responsibilities
  - ‘to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible’ *(Local Government Act 1993)*
  - ‘to conserve biological diversity and promote ecologically sustainable development’ *(Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995)*

- Community expectations

- Healthy landscapes support healthy communities
NRM Survey


- 64 councils responded (42% of NSW councils)

- The highest priority NRM issues were:
  - Native plant conservation
  - Water quality
  - Weed management
  - Development pressures & land use
Climate Change Needs Surveys

• 2009 Survey by DECCW
• 2010 Survey by the Associations:
  101 councils responded about their action on climate change including barriers, drivers and future needs (70% of NSW councils)
  - competing priorities, staff
  - support from executive management
What are NSW councils doing?

Risk assessments, adaptation strategies, land use planning & policies – examples include:

• City of Sydney’s draft "Urban Ecology Strategy."

• Goulburn Mulwaree Council with financial assistance from the local CMA engaged consultants to undertake a Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy included in Council’s LEP 2009 including:
  – Corridors for revegetation
  – Stipulating that High & Medium Conservation Value areas require further investigation if DA’s are submitted
  – Identifying Biodiversity “Hotspots”
What are NSW councils doing?

• Lake Macquarie City Council’s *Biodiversity Policy and Guidelines* establish how biodiversity surveys are to be conducted & is proposing a *Biodiversity Offset Policy* requiring that any unavoidable clearing must be offset by dedication of appropriate habitat elsewhere.

• Using appropriate land use zoning to protect biodiversity values & considering additional policy controls/local provisions e.g. within the Standard Instrument LEP.
What are NSW councils doing?

- Protecting areas identified as significant vegetation and habitat corridors via mapping and development controls.
- North Sydney Council is educating & engaging the local community to facilitate the development of ‘green corridors’ to aid the movement of genetic material between North Sydney’s fragmented bushland reserve system & adjoining bushland.
What are NSW councils doing?

Specific actions:

• Carbon sequestration - native forest/woodland habitat in areas which were previously farmland; biodiverse forests

• Bird boxes - additional habitat for native birds & animals displaced by loss of mature woodland trees, through over clearing & in response to climate change

• Bushland rehabilitation/Bushcare - working with Landcare groups, active pest & weed management
What are NSW councils doing?

Research:

• Ku-ring-gai Council investigating the benefit or otherwise of hazard reduction burns & whether strengthening the resilience of housing stock & defendable space on the interface is a better investment than continuing to burn the bush for little benefit in terms of risk reduction
What are issues for managers and policy makers?

Values and beliefs

• *It is extremely difficult to integrate any consideration of biodiversity into decision making, let alone in the context of climate change adaptation. Council does not consider biodiversity outside the minimum statutory requirements.*

• *A belief held by some that biodiversity is more relevant or addressed more effectively by other levels of government*
What are issues for managers and policy makers?

Lack of resources

- **Primarily not having a dedicated biodiversity officer or someone with those responsibilities (staff time and capacity - expertise)**
- **Lack of funds to undertake initiatives - e.g. research, feral animals and plant control, more extensive fencing of areas**
- **Lack of information, knowledge or clear direction on how local government can or should address climate change impacts on biodiversity**
What are issues for managers and policy makers?

Lack of information – feedback from ACT

• Little information about climate change at the scale appropriate for conservation planning
• Do not yet have very good mapping of vegetation communities at fine scale
• There is not a good understanding of the thresholds at which species/ecosystems will change under climate change scenarios
• The added pressure of interactions between feral animals and native ecosystems under climate change is not well understood
What are issues for managers and policy makers?

Climate change risks

• Exacerbation of loss of connectivity due to habitat clearing and fragmentation
• Changed fire regimes - more frequent and/or severe
• Increased risk of pest & pathogen outbreaks
• Greater potential for transformative weed establishment and rapid spread
• Effect of higher temperatures (including overnight & heat wave periods) on terrestrial & aquatic ecosystems
• More variable soil moisture & stream flows
What are issues for managers and policy makers?

Climate change risks

- Risk of inundation from rising sea levels & salt water intrusion into ground water dependant ecosystems
- Threat of losing remaining remnants of salt marsh due to sea level rise
- Natural systems coastal ecosystems cannot migrate inland in response to rising sea levels as most of the retreat zones are already developed
- Council does not have funds to acquire new land or down zone existing areas to create suitable retreat zones
- Acquiring land in private ownership
Resources for Councils

• Fact Sheets & Resources – *Climate Change Action Planning Workshop Package*

• Guidelines - *Integrating NRM into Local Government Operations*

• Workshops

• Councillor Training in NRM

• Websites

• Email newsletters

• Online forum
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